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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses some of the background rationale for bilingual education and raises issues concerning personnel training, with indications as to how these issues have been dealt with in the program at SUNY-Albany. In the preparation of bilingual educators, the relationship between the educator's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic background and his ability to work effectively with students of the same background in an educational program must be considered. Although it is an immeasurable advantage to have a native member of a particular culture as teacher, the qualification of being a native speaker is not sufficient by itself. Above all, an excellent knowledge of the subject matter is required. Courses of instruction should be varied to meet the needs of bilipgual classroom teachers as well as second-level bilingual educators, such as supervisors, curriculum coordinators, or project directors. There must be a balance between theoretical courses and practice-centered activities in the curriculum for bilingual educators. Inaccurate views regarding the language of minority students must be corrected, and the need for linguistic knowledge about the systematic nature of all dialects must be recognized. Teachers trained for work across cultures must understand that language variations arise through social and cultural forces and are not the result of laziness or stupidity. (PM)

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Issues in Teacher Preparation for Cross-Cultural Education*

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There appears to be general agreement that the model of American society as a melting pot with assimilation as an ideal, has been widely replaced in educational circles by the model of America as a mosiac with cultural pluralism as an ideal. Formal statements of support for this shift from an assimilationist to a pluralistic model of American society and American education have come from such influential organizations as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and the National Education Association.. Yet this support, and the lack of widespread hostility to the concept of cultural pluralism, probably does not indicate that a shift from values associated with assimilation to those associated with cultural pluralism has taken place in our society as a whole. We would be hard pressed I believe to support the notion that the majority in America even knows about, much less supports, the concepts and values inherent in multiculturalism. To demonstrate this one need only cite the antagonisms still generated by minor differences such as dress and hair style, intense hostilities created by color differences, religious differences, and language and dialect differences. These facts would seem to indicate the majority still clings to values which emphasize likeness rather than respect for differences.[1] Yet it would perhaps be strange if this were not so to some degree even here in America. Suspicion of difference, fear of the category of "other," and the assignment of stereotyped, negative traits to "others" are held independently by many peoples throughout the world. These are probably unthinking responses to the threat inherent in simply coming into contact with the culturally different or socially distinct. Yet if such responses

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are still widespread it is difficult to support the case that in the majority culture in our nation there does in fact exist widespread support for the concept of cultural pluralism.

It does appear to be the case though that there is relative absence of conflict over the ideal of cultural pluralism with its implied recognition of the value of linguistic and cultural diversity for our society. This may in part be due to different conceptions of what is implied by the terms multiculturalism and cultural pluralism. To some it may simply imply respect for different languages and cultures while peoples representing those cultures are in the process of becoming adjusted to the majority culture. There would be no support for the ideal of cultural pluralism and of maintaining the non-Anglo culture in this view. The fact that such an opinion may be unfortunate does not make it any less real and widespread. It would seem that such views must be considered as background to any discussion of issues in cross-cultural education.

Other explanations for at least passive acceptance of a multicultural approach to education probably include growing school populations of non-English mother-tongue children, growing political strength of minority groups, and the dismal record of traditional approaches in the education of culturally different children. We can briefly document these points.

The total population of all non-English background school-age children in the United States has shown a rise from 3.2 million in 1960,[2] to 5 million in 1973.[3] The number of school-aged Spanish-background children has grown from roughly 1.7 million in 1960,[4] to 3.2 million in 1970.[5]

This growth in numbers of NEMT children nationwide has been highlighted by an increase in numbers of such children in specific areas. For example, there were in 1970 in New York State an estimated 160,000 NEMT students who had "significant English language handicaps."[6] More than 95,000 of the Puerto Rican school population of 250,000 in New York City had English language difficulties in 1970.[7] This compares with only 40,000 non-English speaking Puerto Rican students in New York City in 1957.[8] In 1972 these figures had risen to over 100,000 Spanish-background students in New York City public schools having English language problems.[9] There have been comparable increases in NEMT (primarily Spanish background) children in other areas of the nation.

Regarding educational failures, there is widespread agreement that traditional approaches to the education of minority NEMT children in our schools have been inadequate. The problem was recognized by the Congress in the opening statement of the Bilingual Education Act:

> The Congress hereby finds that one of the most acute educational problems in the United States is that which involves millions of children of limited English-speaking ability because they come from environments where the dominant language is other than English.[10]

The Fleishmann Commission Report, cited above, noted that in New York State:

> the most distressing incidence of academic failure the Commission has uncovered occurs among a group of children who are handicapped by a language barrier in the classroom--those children whose native language is not English and whose difficulty comprehending English significantly impedes successful school performance.[11]

Statistical evidence provides persuasive testimony to the failure of traditional approaches in the education of NEMT minority children:

> California made a study of the educational disparity between the Mexican-American and his fellow citizens as of 1960. It found that the level of education of Spanish-surnamed individuals was well below the level of the total population and was even below that of the non-white population. More than half of the males and nearly half the females 14 years old and over had not gone beyond the eighth grade. By contrast, only 27.9 percent of the males and 25 percent of the females over 14 in the total population had not gone beyond the eight grade.[12]

And in New York:

> Puerto Rican pupils account for 22.8 percent of the total school population of New York City. Of these Puerto Rican pupils, more than one third (95,000) were described by the 1970 school census as non-English speaking. Of this total, approximately 25,000 are receiving instruction in English as a second language, and fewer than 6,000 are enrolled in completely bilingual-bicultural programs. The results of the English language difficulties of Puerto Rican pupils are tragically clear: these pupils are lowest in reading scores, highest in dropout rates, and weakest in academic preparation of all pupils in New York State.[13]

Such statistics and others[14] strongly suggest that traditional approaches have not been successful in educating NEMT students in our schools. Thus it is not suprising that support for a bilingual-bicultural approach to the education of such children has come from educators and statesman at all levels concerned with equality of educational opportunity. The National Education Association, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the New York State Regents, and the New York State Commission on the Cost, Quality, and Finance of Elementary and Secondary Schools have all issued statements or position papers supportive of the concept of bilingual education.[16] Further, recent opinions delivered by the United States Supreme Court, requiring special attention to language problems of minority children, suggest that bilingual

education is one choice in meeting the problem.[15]

In addition, the "traditional" arguments in favor of bilingual education still appear valid:[17]

- if all school instruction is in English, then to the extent the child is deficient in English, his concept development throughout the school curriculum will be retarded.

- teaching the curriculum through the child's native language and thus strengthening knowledge of that language, while at the same time teaching English as a second language, will result both in assurance that the child understands the curriculum content, and also that a vital national resource - the child's bilingualism - is maintained.

- recognition and utilization of the child's unique strengths - his first language and culture - will result in enhanced self-concept and avoid the psychological damage done if these are ignored or suppressed by the school.

- teaching the bilingual child literacy in his strongest language first should result in the final analysis in his learning to read English more rapidly.

- establishment of new bilingual programs in the schools requires school personnel representing the majority culture to confront their own feelings about minority students, and to provide something beyond lip service in recognition of the legitimacy of cultural pluralism.

With this view of some conditions in our schools and our society as background, we can suggest a number of issues in training educators for work across cultures. I will simply raise these issues and give a brief note on how we have coped with them in our own Masters program for preparing bilingual educators at SUNY at Albany.

There is the issue of competence and ethnicity in education. That is, to what extent is there a relationship between an educator's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic background and one's ability to work effectively with children (and

others) of the same background in an educational program? Here we have said in effect that it certainly is an immeasurable advantage to have the linguistic and cultural competencies that accrue from being a native member of a particular culture. At the same time we have said that this alone is not enough; there must be other competencies such as an excellent knowledge of subject matter. And we have said that it is not inconceivable that Anglos, with sufficient experience in living and learning in another culture, may have the required competencies to work in the Spanish side of bilingual education programs. Indeed it might often be these Anglos with bilingual competencies and bicultural perspectives who are among the most effective proponents of bilingual education in the face of that majority culture apathy or hostility mentioned earlier.

There is the issue of levels of service for which educators are being prepared. That is, what are the needs in multicultural education for preparing bilingual classroom teachers, in relation to needs for second-level bilingual educators to serve as supervisors, curriculum coordinators, or project directors? In the initial years of our program we assumed virtually all of our bilingual graduates with Masters degrees would return to education as classroom teachers. They did not. Fully half of the graduates in the first two years of our program went on to become "second level" educators. They were offered, and accepted, jobs as program directors, associate directors, curriculum coordinators, and the like. As a result of this experience, our SUNYA program currently has two sequences of courses, one for second-level educators, and one for classroom teachers. We feel this is a realistic approach to the facts in this situation.

There is the issue of the balance between theoretical courses and practice-centered activities in the curriculum for bilingual educators. That is, where should the emphasis lie in view of the goals of a teacher preparation program? Our Masters program currently provides for a rough balance of 15 hours of education courses and 15 hours for others. Field-centered experiences have proven extremely valuable this past year due in no small measure to assistance from the Bilingual Education Unit of the State Education Department. We plan to continue these experiences in our program with field activities at the State Education Department and in bilingual programs in Amsterdam, in Beacon, and in New York City. In addition, our methods component calls for field-centered experiences in several schools. We feel it crucial that participants in our program keep in touch with reality by working with children on a continuing basis during their studies here.

And finally, there is the issue of standard and non-standard dialects and what information should be provided to educators on that topic. I will speak to that question as it pertains to standard and non-standard English, but I believe much of the discussion will be relevant to the situation for Spanish dialects.

It would seem axiomatic that those who work with or train others to work with children whose first dialect or language is other than standard English should have at the minimum information concerning what we know of the nature of language and how it is learned. This includes an understanding that by the time they enter school all normal children regardless of cultural backgrounds, control the phonology and grammar of at least one language, and if this happens to be a language or dialect other than the standard it is not an indication of

some mental or physical aberration on the part of the child.

This has certainly not always been understood. We know of the Mexican-American children who as recently as 1970 were being placed in classes for the "educable mentally retarded" in California because of tests and procedures that failed to take into account their first language and culture.[18] And although children speaking a non-standard variety of English may do better on such tests than those speaking no English, they are likely to do at least as poorly when faced with teacher attitudes. Thus it would seem especially crucial to communicate to teachers in cross-cultural education programs what we know about the systematic, rule-governed nature of all dialects at the phonological and grammatical levels. We must demonstrate that although non-standard varieties of English, for example, reduce word-final consonant clusters so that burned up becomes burn' up, cold ale, becomes col' ale, and so forth, this is a rule-governed process that also occurs in standard English in different phonological environments. Thus in standard English burned down becomes burn' down, and cold cuts becomes col' cuts and so forth. Pointing out to teachers the fact that the same process, consonant cluster reduction, is occuring in both standard and non-standard English, should help them avoid stigmatizing children for using that process.

At the grammatical level also, the rules for standard and non-standard English are very similar. The application of similar rules at different points in speech, however, results in triggering negative attitudes toward the users of those slightly different rules. For example the basic rule for negation in English says to attach the negative marker to the first indefinite or auxiliary verb in a sentence. So we get Nobody saw it, or John can't have any or John

didn't have any. A second negation rule says we can shift the negative marker from the first auxiliary to a following indefinite. This rule produces the slightly snobbish, somewhat literary John can have none and John had none. A third negation rule of English says that one may copy the negative marker from the auxiliary to the following indefinite so we end up with John can't have none, or John didn't have none. Although the same process produces negatives occurring in the same places as with the previous two rules, the social responses elicited by these latter forms are completely different than those elicited by the former. Here, rather than a slightly literary-sounding John can have none, we get John can't have none, a form greatly despised by many people, including many educators. The widely held view is that while the result of the former rule is a somewhat elegant sentence, the multiple negatives resulting from application of the latter rule are somehow indicative of illogical, deficient, sloppy language. Some educators apparently even feel that if children use these forms they will be hampered in thinking clearly. We know about negative teacher attitudes toward language being translated into negative teacher expectations for children using that language. There is evidence of course that these negative expectations result in a self-fulfilling prophecy. When children are expected to do poorly they often fulfill that expectation.

It is the need to understand the inaccuracy of such views regarding the language of minority children, and the need for knowledge about the systematic nature of all dialects, that we feel are particularly crucial in programs preparing teachers for work across cultures. Educators must have an understanding that language variations arise through social and cultural forces, through interactions with people who use these forms and not through such things as "lazy

tongues" or "stupidity." It is particularly important that this understanding be communicated to the teachers who themselves have arisen from working class backgrounds and who are often likely to be the most rigid and intolerant toward non-standard English, or even toward teaching through a language other than English in bilingual education programs.

Educators must know about the social variables that influence speech, and understand that the otherwise normal, so-called "non-verbal" child has yet to be discovered, given adequate controls for these variables. Socioeconomic class, topic, listener, age, and setting are all variables that influence speech. The studies by William Labov and others which shed light on this area must be considered with some care by educators who are to work in educational programs in cross-cultural situations.

We have touched on only a few of the issues to be considered in preparing educators for work in cross-cultural education. We have obviously left untouched other issues which are of importance in such programs. However, until institutions preparing educators for work with children from different cultural backgrounds include attention to at least these issues in their curriculum, it is likely that education for many such children will continue to be less than adequate.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Evidence for the tenacity of this negative view of cultural differences is found in publications of influential educational organizations. Thus as late as 1972, long after the term "culturally disadvantaged" had been exorcised from most educational literature, we still find the International Reading Association imprimateur on a booklet entitled The Language Experience Approach for the Culturally Disadvantaged (by Mary Anne Hall, Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association).

[2] "The Challenge of Bilingualism" in Reginald Bishop, Jr. (ed), Foreign Language Teaching: Challenges to the Profession (New York: Modern Language Association, 1965), p. 96.

[3] Report on Education of the Disadvantaged, 7,9 (April 10, 1974), p. 5.

[4] Bishop, Ibid. 96

[5] This figure was obtained by applying the 34% figure for 5-19 year old Spanish surname persons in five southwestern states (noted by Bishop, Ibid, p. 97), to the 1970 census figure of 9.6 million "persons of Spanish language" in the U.S. From: Persons of Spanish Ancestry, Supplementary Report (Washington: Bureau of the Census, 1973), p. II.

[6] The Fleishmann Commission Report, Part III, Vol. II. (New York: The New York State Commission on the Cost, Quality and Finance of Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1972), p. 1.

[7] Ibid, p. 2.

[8] Mary Jenkins, Bilingual Education in New York City (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1971), p. 10

[9] Language Ability Survey of Pupils in New York City Public Schools as of October 31, 1972, (New York: Board of Education of the City of New York, 1973), p. 3.

[10] Title VII, United States Elementary and Secondary Education Act, The Bilingual Education Act, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 13.

[11] The Fleishmann Commission Report, Op. Cit. p. 1.

[12] The Invincible Minority..Pero No Vencibles, (Washington: The National Education Association, 1966), p. 6.

[13] New York State Regents, Bilingual Education: A Statement of Policy and Proposed Action by the Regents of the University of the State of New York (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1972), p. 6.

[14] See for example: Equal Educational Opportunity for Puerto Rican Children: Hearings Before the Senate Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, Part 8, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), Bilingual Education, Parts 1 and 2, Hearings Before the Special Subcommittee on Bilingual Education, U.S. Senate (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), Bilingual Education Programs: Hearings Before the General Subcommittee on Education, House of Representatives (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), and Proceedings of the National Conference on Educational Opportunities

for Mexican Americans (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1968).

[15]These statements are contained in the following documents: Brief for the National Education Association and the California Teachers Association as Amici Curiae, (in the Lau vs. Nichols case), (Washington: National Education Association, 1974), p. 12; Journal of Teacher Education, XXIV, 4, Winter 1973, pp. 264-5; Bilingual Education: New York State Regents Position Paper Number 16, August, 1972, pp. 12, 13; The Fleishmann Commission Report, Part III, Vol. II. 1972, p.3.

[16]"Full Text of Opinions: Lau vs. Nichols," The United States Law Week, 42, 28, (January 22, 1974), p. 4166.

[17]Most of these arguments in favor of bilingual education were advanced by Bruce Gaarder of the U.S. Office of Education in testimony in support of the Bilingual Education Act, before the U.S. Senate in 1967. They originally appeared in The Congressional Record, May 18, 1967, pp. S7102-3, and have since been reprinted in several texts.

[18]For some evidence for the existence of this practice see "On Language Arts and Minority Group Children" by R. Light in Roger Abrahams and Rudolph Troike (eds.), Language and Culture Diversity in American Education (Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1972).